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Middletown, R.I. 02842-5968
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Dockets Management Branch
Food & Drug Administration
Dept. of Health and Human Services
12420 Parklawn Dr. Room #1-23
Rockville, MD 20857

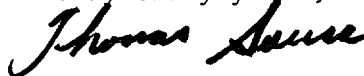
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am taking time to write as one much concerned about animal welfare and especially after reading an article on the inhumane treatment of laying hens.

The egg industry practices "forced" or "induced" molting in order to increase the amount of time a hen will lay eggs. This natural molting process means that chickens will normally stop laying eggs for 3-4 months during a "molt." The egg industry thinks 4 months is too long to wait. In order to speed up the molt, hens are actually starved for up to 2 weeks, or given feed which is nutritionally deficient. They are also deprived of light and water. Chickens may lose more than 25% of their body weight, and 5%-10% will die. This artificial molt stops egg production for only 2 months which allows the egg industry to manipulate egg production as well as consumer prices.

I am writing to ask that you grant the petition filed to eliminate the forced molting of hens. The Docket Number is 98P-0203/CP.

Very truly yours,



Thomas Sousa

98P-0203

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